Northwestern
GLOBAL POVERTY
RESEARCH LAB

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Recruitment & Mode Effects on Sample Composition

Case Study: Children's Learning and Family Wellbeing in the Context of Social Distance, Peru

IPA Peru partnered with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Ministries of Education in Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Peru to study the effects of COVID-19 on educational systems in Latin America. In Peru, IPA conducted 4,939 surveys representing 2.3 percent of total pre-school and kindergarten enrollment in the country using two recruitment modes: a phone survey and a self-administered survey recruited using WhatsApp. Surveys that target caregivers of school-age children were more likely to reach women (respondents who identified as female) than men, but the way in which sample members are recruited can have a big impact on how large a majority women make up. In this case, with WhatsApp we reached an even higher share of women (91 percent versus 9 percent men) than phone (72 percent women versus 28 percent men). WhatsApp respondents were also younger. The research team hypothesized that the recruitment mode and administrative list construction combined to produce substantively different samples of parents.

Sampling Protocol

The survey was conducted using two modes: (1) a telephone survey randomly sampled from Ministry of Education lists with regional stratification and (2) a self-administered survey distributed by teachers to student families using WhatsApp (some areas were difficult to reach with WhatsApp distribution due to limited internet connectivity). The WhatsApp recruitment also included "snowball" sampling: different UGELs (local management units) were identified, preschool teachers in selected UGELs received WhatsApp survey links, and those preschool teachers forwarded survey links to students' families.

Results and Takeaways

The research team compared the characteristics, notably gender and age, of respondents to both survey modes. Table 1 shows that phone surveys reached a smaller majority of women than did WhatsApp (72 percent versus 91 percent) and an older respondent population (average of 36 years old by phone versus 32 years by WhatsApp). There are several possible hypotheses that may explain these differences:

Table 1: Caregiver Gender and Age by Mode

		Phone	WhatsApp
Gender	Female	71.9%	91.1%
	Male	28.1%	8.9%
Age (average years)		36	32

- **"Survey language" matters**: In Spanish, the Ministry of Education (MoE) uses the term *apoderado* in school registration forms; this defaults to the male gendered noun and translates to "legal guardian." In Peruvian culture, this term is typically associated with some sort of authority within the household, such as the head of household, who is often the father.
- **"Recruitment strategies" matter**: The MoE registers parents at school assemblies and enrollment registrations, which are also more often attended by the father (the "legal guardian") than the mother.
- **Administrative list construction matters**: The MoE then used these same parent registries to construct administrative lists for these surveys. We hypothesize that phone registrations were more likely to be male than other method of identifying a primary caregiver. During WhatsApp recruitment, teachers forwarded surveys to caregivers on WhatsApp, and they may have identified mothers as more likely caregivers than fathers because mothers were more likely lead household communication with teachers.

Other research projects should take these lessons into consideration when building sample frames.